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AUTHOR Lewis, Anne; And Others
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ABSTRACT

If the American schoolhouse symbolizes public concern for children, millions of today's youngsters are receiving a negative message. Based on available statistics and information, and using a representative sample of one-half of the country's public school buildings, this investigation found that 25 percent of the nation's school buildings are shoddy and inadequate; another 33 percent are approaching inadequacy due to increasing enrollments; and the remaining 42 percent are in good condition because their communities can afford them. The chapter 1 overview indicates that prospects for improving or replacing deteriorating structures are grim. The schoolhouse may be the most seriously threatened strand of America's aging infrastructure because (1) more than 50 percent of schools in use today were built during the 1950s and 1960s, a time of rapid, cheap construction; (2) school districts are again facing enrollment crunches; (3) state aid to local districts is generally inadequate; (4) space for mandated special programs is lacking; (5) funding and training for modern maintenance personnel are inadequate; (6) school planning is not integrated with overall community needs; and (7) erratic data collection and state involvement do not facilitate long-range planning. Chapter 2 details construction deficiencies; growth, maintenance, and safety problems; and the effects of changing educational programs and philosophies. Chapter 3 discusses the school facilities finance crisis, while chapter 4 outlines emerging issues, trends, and questions. An "Afterwords" section presents data tables; checklists used in the study; and resource listings of reporters, project advisers, general sources, state facilities directors, and the Council of Great City Schools business officials. (MLH)

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